

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 CIAE-00 /028 W
-----107367 110205Z /64

R 101530Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6527

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 0418

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EEW, ECON, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET IMPORTS

REF: (A) STATE 1177, (B) MOSCOW 18626.

1. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO GO BACK TO BOBROV AT PRESENT FOR FURTHER ELABORATION, WE WILL TRY TO GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOVIET OFFICIALS ON THE QUESTIONS WHICH THE DEPARTMENT RAISES. WE AGREE WITH THE PRESUMPTION THAT INCREASED GRAIN IMPORTS WOULD EXPLAIN A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE INCREASE IN SOVIET IMPORTS FROM THE WEST IN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 1977.

2. IT IS OF COURSE POSSIBLE THAT BOBROV'S STATEMENT THAT MACHINERY IMPORTS WOULD GROW BUT LITTLE IN 1978 WAS A PRESTIGE-SAVING CIRCUMLOCUTION FOR SAYING THERE WOULD BE NO GROWTH AT ALL. WE ARE INCLINED, HOWEVER, TO BELIEVE HE IS EXPECTING SOME GROWTH THIS YEAR. IN DISCUSSION OVER COCKTAILS OF THIS POINT JANUARY 6, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE MANZHULO SAID IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT QUESTION THAT THESE IMPORTS WOULD GROW SOMEWHAT IN 1978. (ADMITTEDLY MANZHULO WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT REFERENCE TO NOTES AND DID NOT APPEAR FULLY SURE OF HIS FACTS.)

3. ON SAME OCCASION, WITH REFERENCE TO BAYBAKOV STATEMENT IN 1978 PLAN SPEECH THAT TURNOVER WITH U.S. WOULD INCREASE THIS YEAR, WE ASKED MANZHULO IF U.S. IMPORTS WOULD INCREASE. MANZHULO THOUGHT THAT THEY WOULD DO SO, NOTING THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ABOVE DEPRESSED 1977 LEVEL ALTHOUGH FALLING SHORT OF 1976. (IN THIS CONTEXT IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT MINISTER PATOLICHEV IN JUNE, 1977, PREDICTED THAT SOVIET IMPORTS OF U.S. NON-AGRICULTURAL GOODS WOULD BE ONLY ABOUT HALF OF 1976 FIGURES DURING BOTH 1977 AND 1978. 1977 WILL BE SOMEWHAT ABOVE THIS PESSIMISTIC FORECAST, AND POSSIBLY 1978 WILL SEE A SLIGHT FURTHER IMPROVEMENT.)

4. WE APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S INTEREST IN THESE MATTERS AND
WILL OF COURSE KEEP TRYING TO ELICIT FURTHER ELABORATION FROM
SOVIETS.

MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: IMPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 jan 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW00418
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780015-0555
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780181/aaaacqdz.tel
Line Count: 67
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 79aceae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 1177, 78 MOSCOW 18626
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3801511
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET IMPORTS
TAGS: EEW, ECON, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/79aceae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014